

NH Correctional Facility for Women – A New Beginning through a New Facility

Legal Challenges

The NH Department of Corrections (DOC) has, throughout its history, faced legal challenges on the conditions of confinement and with providing a level of parity in the delivery of programs and treatment services provided to women and the men who are incarcerated in the DOC. In the 1987 lawsuit *Fiandaca, et al. v. Cunningham*, the U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire (Judge Martin F. Loughlin) found that the state had violated the plaintiffs' right to equal protection of the law and ordered the construction of a permanent in-state facility for the plaintiffs, no later than July 1, 1989 and to provide services equivalent to those provided to male inmates at the state prison. As a result of this Federal Court Order, the Department leased the former Hillsborough County Jail in Goffstown as a temporary solution. We are still operating out of that facility today. Legal Assistance of N.H. has become the legal representation of women incarcerated in the DOC and has continued legal action in *Woods et. al. v. Wrenn* as a result of the State not resolving the actions outlined above. In 2016, Governor Hassan and the N.H. State Legislature provided funding for the construction of a new correctional facility for women which will be ready for occupancy in the Fall of 2017.

Site Preparation and Construction

Site preparation involved blasting the ledge and large rock located on the site to maximize the use of on-site materials. The blasted material was crushed, screened, and stockpiled for the building construction. Unsuitable materials, including some large rip rap and shot rock, were used to fill in unstable areas on the Concord Prison property which were left over from Granite Quarry operations that ceased in the 1920's. In order to establish building pads, construction teams removed over ½ million cubic yards of granite and earth.

Some Interesting Facts

Working with the Department of Environmental Services, three non-compliant underground storage tanks were removed from the site as part of the project.

Approximately 65% of the contract dollars for all phases of work on the project have been awarded to companies that are either NH based or have direct ties to the state including the local division of the Construction Manager with offices in Merrimack, NH.

The project has incorporated a public arts component. In addition to artwork being commissioned to be displayed throughout the facility, donations are being accepted by the NH Council of Churches and the Greater Concord Interfaith Council to construct and install a 26" x 8' stained glass panel in the chapel.

The Architectural and Engineering drawings for the projects have received high praise with minimal amounts of Request for Information. A limited number of field changes have been made for a project of this size with less than 100 to date.

Changes to the project are well under the industry standard at less than 2% of total construction cost.

In this capital project we used the Construction Manager at Risk process. We were able to negotiate contracts with lower costs which have to date resulted in over \$500,000 of savings. These funds were then available to be added back to aspects of the project removed during the value management process, to include: a synthetic gymnasium floor in lieu of exposed concrete, a fully paved perimeter road around the facility in lieu of gravel, a full welded steel fence versus chain link and a full redundancy of electrical and security systems with a larger emergency generator.

System Enhancements

Security systems in the new facility will utilize the newest technology available including fully digitized cameras with numerous pan tilt zoom capabilities. Devices will detect resident movement and direct cameras to those areas to monitor activities.

The facility will also have a full computer-based mechanical and electrical control system that monitors the building's ventilation, lighting, power and security systems. All of these are connected to an electrical generator, which can power the entire facility. A grant awarded to the DOC will fund large Photo Voltaic Solar panels that will be installed on the roof areas which will provide 10-15% of the electricity needed to run the facility.

Program Enhancements

The physical layout of the facility paves the way for a new beginning for women to have access to equitable programs and services. It creates greater access and dedicated spaces for areas such as educational and vocational programs; behavioral health treatment; medical treatment, including a full-time infirmary; a family connections center; and spiritual services. The new program offerings will include, but are not limited to, a culinary arts program, apprenticeship opportunities, as well as, other much needed enhancements that focus on rehabilitation and reintegration of the women back to our communities. This new facility will allow for greater capacity in the Wellness unit which targets treatment of behavioral health disorders in a modified therapeutic community, and provide a gymnasium and hobby craft space which will enhance positive coping skills and recreation.

Next Steps

The Department is continuing to work with all construction partners to ensure that construction is within budget and the funding remains available to cover any unforeseen circumstances and contingencies. Construction is on schedule and will be substantially complete by November of 2017. The Department has published a request for proposal to contract with a private company to assist in marketing and advertising for our security positions. The goal of this initiative is to seek adequately staffing for the new women's prison as well as to fill existing vacancies at our other facilities. The Department is committed to meeting its mission of providing a safe, secure and humane correctional system that provides for the treatment and promotes the successful re-entry of women who are under the custody and supervision of the NH Department of Corrections. With

the new facility and appropriate staffing levels, we will be able to complete important steps in successfully achieving this mission.